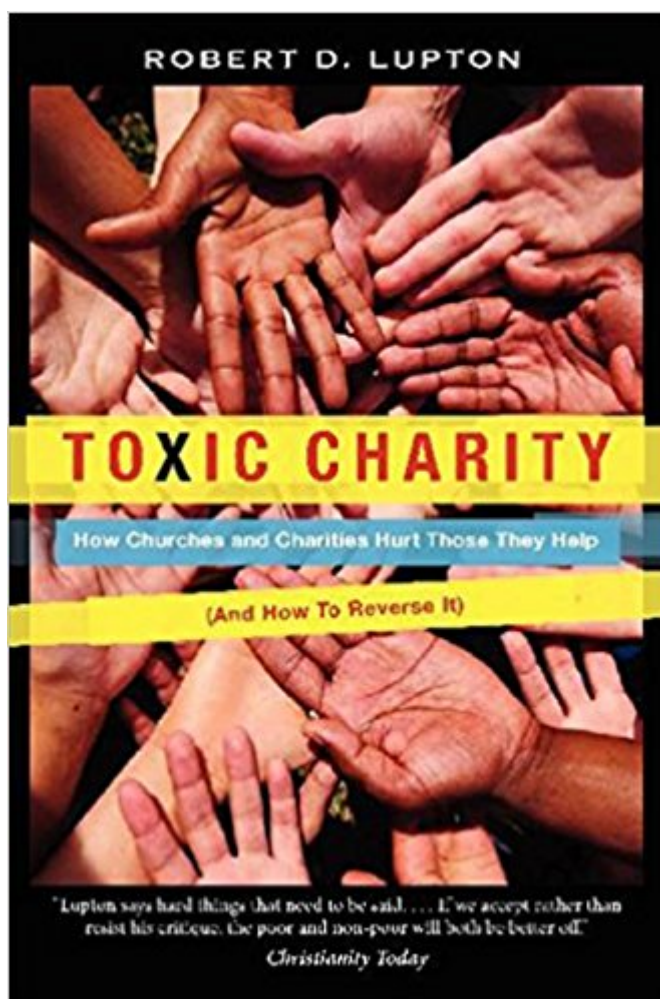


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Toxic Charity: How Churches And Charities Hurt Those They Help, And How To Reverse It



Synopsis

Veteran urban activist Robert Lupton reveals the shockingly toxic effects that modern charity has upon the very people meant to benefit from it. *Toxic Charity* provides proven new models for charitable groups who want to help — not sabotage — those whom they desire to serve. Lupton, the founder of FCS Urban Ministries (Focused Community Strategies) in Atlanta, the voice of the *Urban Perspectives* newsletter, and the author of *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life*, has been at the forefront of urban ministry activism for forty years. Now, in the vein of Jeffrey Sachs's *The End of Poverty*, Richard Stearns's *The Hole in Our Gospel*, and Gregory Boyle's *Tattoos on the Heart*, his groundbreaking *Toxic Charity* shows us how to start serving needy and impoverished members of our communities in a way that will lead to lasting, real-world change.

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Customer Reviews

“Lupton says hard things that need to be said, and he's earned the right to say them. Believers would do well to receive his words with the mindset that faithful are the wounds of a friend.” (Christianity Today) “[Lupton's] new book, *Toxic Charity*, draws on his 40 years' experience as an urban activist in Atlanta, and he argues that most charitable work is ineffective or actually harmful to those it is supposed to help.” (Washington Post) “Lupton's work, his books and, most importantly, his life continue to guide and encourage me to live and serve in a way that honors God and my

neighbor. I highly recommend Toxic Charity. (Danny Wuerffel, Executive Director, Desire Street Ministries) "Lupton's book reminds us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. He shows how the people called poor can be blessed by supporting opportunities for them to give their gifts, skills, knowledge and wisdom to creating the future. (John McKnight, Codirector, Asset Based Community Development Institute, Northwestern University) "A must-read book for those who give or help others. (Booklist) "In Toxic Charity, Lupton reminds us that being materialistically poor does not mean that there is no capacity, no voice, and no dignity within a person. If we truly love the poor, we will want to educate ourselves on how best to serve. Let our charity be transformative not toxic. (Roger Sandberg, Executive Director of Medair International) "A superb book. Toxic Charity should serve as a guide and course correction for anyone involved in charitable endeavors at home or abroad. (Ronald W. Nikkel, President, Prison Fellowship International) "Toxic Charity provides the needed counterbalance to a kind heart: a wise mind. Though I often thought, "Ouch!" while I was reading the book, Robert Lupton gave this pastor what I needed to become a more effective leader. (Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor, Northland Church A Church Distributed) "When Bob Lupton speaks of the inner city, the rest of us ought to sit up and take notice... [His work is] deeply disturbing in the best sense of the word. (Philip Yancey, author of What Good Is God?) "Top 10 book of the year. (World Magazine)

Public service is a way of life for Americans; giving is a part of our national character. But compassionate instincts and generous spirits aren't enough, says veteran urban activist Robert D. Lupton. In this groundbreaking guide, he reveals the disturbing truth about charity: all too much of it has become toxic, devastating to the very people it's meant to help. In his four decades of urban ministry, Lupton has experienced firsthand how our good intentions can have unintended, dire consequences. Our free food and clothing distribution encourages ever-growing handout lines, diminishing the dignity of the poor while increasing their dependency. We converge on inner-city neighborhoods to plant flowers and pick up trash, battering the pride of residents who have the capacity (and responsibility) to beautify their own environment. We fly off on mission trips to poverty-stricken villages, hearts full of pity and suitcases bulging with giveaways trips that one Nicaraguan leader describes as effective only in "turning my people into beggars. In Toxic Charity, Lupton urges individuals, churches, and organizations to step away from these spontaneous, often destructive acts of compassion toward thoughtful paths to community development. He delivers proven strategies for moving from toxic charity to

transformative charity. Proposing a powerful “Oath for Compassionate Service” and spotlighting real-life examples of people serving not just with their hearts but with proven strategies and tested tactics, Lupton offers all the tools and inspiration we need to develop healthy, community-driven programs that produce deep, measurable, and lasting change. Everyone who volunteers or donates to charity needs to wrestle with this book.

I bought this because I was beginning to see how much our Christian charity was doing more harm than good to people. After 50 years of so many food giveaways and free this and free that, and missions trips to faraway lands to ostensibly ‘help’ the less fortunate, instead we have taken the dignity away from the people and made them beholden to Christian (and secular) charity, so much so that they cannot do anything on their own. Tomorrow morning they are the same as they were before we ‘helped’ them. This book confirmed what I already was feeling, and offered some useful insights into what TO do, and what NOT to do. See also Robert Lupton’s book *Charity Detox*, the follow up to *Toxic Charity*.

This is a MUST read book for any one or any group that is involved with charity. I was truly impressed with the clear and understandable way Robert D. Lupton explained the idea and concept of giving and helping the less fortunate. *Toxic Charity* is a must-read book for those who give or work with charities. This book gives examples and solutions in an understandable way. I was truly impressed. So often we give, thinking that we are making a positive contribution when it is totally the contrary. Before you join a group, be sure that EVERYONE, AND I MEAN EVERYONE reads this book. It is one of the best!

While I think this book has a glaring blind spot for those in poverty who are truly unemployable and ill served by a paucity of available programs for mental illness and addiction in our particular state (NH), I like the author’s focus on neighborhood empowerment and in-place community development in relationship with current residents over gentrification. I appreciate his scathing critique of charitable programs who ride their buses into poor neighborhoods, assert their feel-good will on the community, and then leave without ever forming a relationship with or asking a question of an actual resident or stakeholder. I will be reading this with a church group. I expect that we’ll change our approach to a few things after this, or at least refine our approach to new programs.

The Oath for Compassionate Service
Never do for the poor what they have (or

could have) the capacity to do for themselves. *Limit one-way giving to emergency situations. Strive to empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements. Subordinate self-interests to the needs of those being served. Listen closely to those you seek to help, especially to what is not being said* •unspoken feelings may contain essential clues to effective service. Above all, do no harm.

Lupton's book provides considerable food for thought. If supporting non-profits or if one is associated with a non-profit distributing funds, an on-going process of vetting to ensure there is progress is necessary. However, there are times when pure charity is needed. Our diocese and church read the Toxic Charity to help us discern the best balance. Paul Theroux's Dark Star Safari provides another optic on how best to help the needy. Although not all of Toxic Charity's examples are valid, the author provides a good starting point for discussion.

Over all a good book. A little "right leaning" for my taste, but helpful when discussing Christian community development. Last couple of chapters are especially good because they get into application...early chapters of the book are a bit frustrating because they are heavily based on the experience of the author and community development is picked apart without offering many solutions (which are covered in the end)

Our small group all read this before attending a workshop on this topic by Mr. Lupton. It very well prepared us for the workshop and for better understanding the complexity of its many issues.

I would recommend this book for anyone to read but especially for those who have helped in churches, charity, or mission trips. I also recommend this for anyone who is planning on studying abroad or who has previously done so. It truly does give an eye opening perspective on how these things could be hurting communities we think we are helping depending upon our actions. It not only provides this perspectives but also provides example of not only how it could be hurting rather than helping but also how to change our actions to truly helping.

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